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Senior Thesis Project

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Amber Rabbani

Senior Thesis Project

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Summary of Classes

Fundamentals of Dance

- I learned how to compose a dance using specific inspiration
- Learned dance terminology
- Learned how to comment on dance
- Energy portfolio
- Machine study, music study, meter study
- Choreographing to silence

Styles and Forms

- Learned how to choreograph using different techniques
- Ex- music study, John Cage (site specific study) repetition and augmentation of choreography

Laban

- Learning the elements of time and space
- Bartenief symbols
- Movement Analysis
- Created movement using Laban techniques

Drumming for Dance

- Learned rhythms and African songs
- Learned to appreciate having a live accompanist
- Learned classic rhythms

Kinesiology

- Learned how the muscles and bones work when we dance
- Made all the muscles on a clay model
- Learned the functions of each muscles and how it moves the body
- Skeletal system
- Muscular system

To Dance is Human

- Functions of the mind
- Learned how to tell stories verbally and physically
- Cultures
- Guest speakers stories

Dance as a Social Action

- Learned how to infuse dance with social activism
- Learned how to find inspiration from our pedestrian movements
- Dance conference at CalArts
- Researched a company/ individual that change the face of dance (Merce Cunningham)

Jazz 5

- Learned the importance of performance qualities
- Learned how to dance in auditions and what they look for
- Focused on being a diverse dancer (jazz, lyrical, funk, etc)
- Strengthening
- Jazz Walks!
- Focused on dynamics

Principles of Teaching

- California standards
- Working in a school vs. school
- How to teach dance to children
- How to teach a dance class
- Different ways of teaching
- How to write a grant proposal
-

Monday Jazz

- Focused on the proper way to execute technique (turns, proper stretching, etc)
- How to move through your body and use your core for every movement
- Execution of choreography
- Partner work
- Focused on dancing intellectually
- Personal coaching from Paige

Ballet 5

- Proper technique
- How to use move your limbs internally, not externally
- Neutral spine, keeping shoulders over hips
- Using correct muscles to execute movements

Modern 4

- Inversions/ upper body strength
- Weight transfers
- Improvisation
- Partner work/ choreography
- Learning combinations quickly

Modern 5

- Learned how to use momentum
- Contemporary modern work using yoga principles
- Musicality
- Phrasework
- Greater understanding of how the body works

Friday Workshop

- Learned pedestrian movements
- Weight shifts/ free flow, heavy weight
- Yoga principles

Yoga for Dancers

- Positions and their names
- Proper alignment
- Learned what specific muscles were to be used for each position
- Stretching/ strengthening skills

Jazz Workshop

- Learned a different style of commercial dance each week
- Acting for Dancers
- Jazz Funk, Bobby Newberry
- Practiced being a diverse dancer
- Ability to pick up different types of choreography quickly

Personal Aesthetic

Every dancer is an individual. We each have different bodies, personalities and leave different footprints along the way. This is not usually my first thought when thinking about a dancer. Dancers are required to dance in unison, and need to be able to dance many styles. Being unique is an important quality, but knowing how to blend in often gets you the job. My dance training, personality and other interests influence my opinion on what I think is beautiful.

Being exposed to different styles of dance has given me unique sense of style. I started out taking jazz classes at my local studio and quickly advanced. I wanted to start taking lyrical but had to take ballet as a pre-requisite. I was not very fond of this idea. I drug myself to ballet class and immediately fell in love with it. Soon after I enrolled in Ballet Pacifica Conservatory and was taking ballet six days a week, I loved dancing en pointe and grande allegro and soaring through the air. At the age of 15 I knew that I wanted to be a professional ballet dancer.

Everything changed when I injured my knees from forcing my turn out. I had stopped taking ballet because it hurt to be turned out. Since everything in ballet is dancing in an open position I had to stop taking it. I got back into jazz because I needed to move and it was easier on my body. Jazz was fun and exciting to perform. I like learning intricate combinations with a lot of technical skill. Over the years I became more of a "jazz dancer" but never wanted to give up my dream of ballet. I became torn between being a ballet technician and a sassy jazz dancer. I thought that I had to give one up to focus on the other. This was until I transferred to Loyola Marymount. This is

where I became exposed to a whole new world of contemporary work and where I was introduced to the many artists in Los Angeles that integrate different styles of dance. My favorite styles to watch are contemporary ballet companies and contemporary jazz companies. I enjoy watching these dancers because I appreciate the technical training. I am in awe when I see a dancer on stage when the lighting contours their trained muscles.

There is nothing more beautiful to me than watching passionate dancers with strong technique. The hours of training translates into dedication and love for dance. I enjoy watching fluid movement with bursts of sharp gestures. I remember sitting at the edge of my chair the whole time when watching Batshiva perform. The audience could tell just by seeing one of their dancers walk across stage that they were an amazing dancer. Their alignment and placement were immaculate while they danced in unison for fifteen minutes straight.

I find strength to be a beautiful quality as a dancer. My ballet training has instilled the idea that a thin dancer is ideal. To me, the ideal dancer has the body of an Alvin Ailey company member. They are tall and lean and exude enormous strength. They represent the dance community well. They are athletes, and clearly not wimpy people with limitations. When I observe these types of dancers they exude perfection.

My personal aesthetic is a mix between ballet, jazz and hip-hop. I love intricate footwork, soft "watery" movement mixed with the sharpness and attack of hip-hop. This combination equals my own style of modern movement. My personality and interest in these specific styles have molded me into the dancer that I am today.

Whenever I improvise I like to move in mostly Sustained time with bursts of Sudden Time. I like to let the music inspire me and explore how it translates in my body.

I prefer moving in Light Weight due to my years of ballet training. I have to make a conscious effort to give in to Strong Weight and allow momentum to guide my body. I like to dance and live in Indirect Space and focus when I have to.

People would describe me as being a quite person who keeps to myself more often than not. It is not until you get to know me that you learn that I am outgoing. I can see how this comes out in my dancing. I am the person who tries to blend in with others in the beginning, and it is only until I feel comfortable that I stand out. I think that this is why I do not enjoy dancers that give "too much" (in a bad way). There is giving while dancing, and then there is being "in your face". I like moving and watching dancers that invite me in. Its like they have a secret. I want to be intrigued and like a little bit of mystery while observing dance.

Besides my training, other aspects of my life influence my aesthetic. When I am not in class I go to the gym, hike, have an interest in philosophy and love to explore new places. I love to observe people in every day life and see how they live. My openness to new ideas allows me to look at dance from many angels and opinions. I often try to put myself in someone else's shoes to understand that person better. I find myself constantly doing this while watching dance.

It is a dancers job to bring their own artistry to the movement. They need to know when to stylize movement, and when to keep it clean and precise. It is important for them to explore movement and be an intelligent dancer. Using momentum, when and different muscle groups can create an interesting dynamic. I believe that it is important for a dancer to be able to change style with intention. A hand gesture done sharply has a completely different meaning than that movement executed slowly. If a choreographer or

director asks a dancer to perform movement with anger, it would look much different than if instructed to execute it with the emotion of "pride". This may seem like common knowledge, but it is a key quality.

Every dancer is shaped into the artist that they are today. Their interests, training, and personalities are the main ingredients. Through practice they discover their own aesthetic, and learn how to pick up others. The dancer that I have become is one that appreciates many styles. My favorite being contemporary work with strong ballet influences. My interests in dance and outside dance have allowed me to view dance with an open mind. I am grateful for every class and experience that has made me who I am today...a unique individual.

Rabbani, Amber

May 10, 2008

Senior Thesis

The Connection Between Body And Soul

“Dance is an expression of the human body in motion where the intention is to aspire to move beyond--or more consciously than--the pedestrian movement human beings engage in everyday (Copeland, 68).” As humans we all share one thing, and that is our bodies. They are vessels that carry our souls through this journey of life on Earth. While there is movement in dance, movement alone is not dance. There must be an intention for us to categorize movement as dance, and intention requires thought. A dance begins from an organic thought that evolves into a piece of art.

Movement is something that everyone does. Even when we are standing still we are still moving- we breathe. Breath is the rhythm of life, therefore everyone is a mover. A good example of this breath rhythm would be in one type of ending to a modern dance class. After dancers have worked hard and challenged their bodies and minds they stand still and close their eyes. They put one hand over their heart and the other hand over their stomach. In this exercise dancers focus on breath and feel their heartbeat. If one were observing the class not knowing the reason for the exercise it would look as though the dancers were not moving. But in fact, they are noticing the subtle movements that are happening in their bodies, the ones that keep us alive. Although movement is necessary to

function, few may consider themselves dancers.

Dance is a form of expression lacking words. It is a vessel for traditions to be passed down, emotions in kinetic form, and something that simply just feels good. In *A Dancer's Life*, a Martha Graham biography written by Russell Freedman, Freedman quotes Graham in her ability to translate her emotion into kinetic expression. She explains her use of floor work by describing what she was feeling at that moment. When a person is upset “you have a sinking feeling inside you. So as a dancer I showed on the outside what was happening on the inside--my whole body sank or fell to the floor” (Freedman 59). Watching a dancer portray that kind of emotion has the ability to affect the mover and the observer. It brings humanity to another, inspires, moves, brings joy and even offends sometimes. It is the thing that enlivens those who do it.

Dancers are like musicians; the only difference is that we use our bodies to create art instead of a stringed or percussion instrument. One is a first chair soloist or part of the Orchestra. And just like musicians, dancers practice and fine-tune our instrument. While many play the piano, it also takes a long time to become an accomplished pianist. The difference between the dancer and the musician lies in the instrument. For the dancer, every inch of the body must be practiced. The entire instrument must be warmed up, encouraged, enlivened, focused, stretched, and explored. The instrument cannot be put away at the end of the day while the performer takes a break. The instrument, being the body, must be dealt with 24 hours a day.

Dance is complex because for years students take class to perfect their technique,

hoping to see even to see the slightest bit of improvement. Then there is the emotional part of it. Tony Yap, a graphic designer and dancer said that dance is linked to something deeper than his breath. It is in "some ways communication from another area to the external" (Yap). It is a spiritual connection and a quest for meaning. If all that needed attention was turnout and pointed feet dancers would merely be technicians. Margaret N. H'Doubler wrote, "any work begins with a purpose and grows through technique. In dance, as in every art, it is essential to train the mind to use some tool as an instrument with which to mold a medium into an art form" (H'Doubler 127). Dancers must study the body and themselves.

In order to express oneself completely there must be an understanding of movement. Knowing the kinetics of the body helps us master our instruments. When we learn how and why a muscle contraction leads to knee flexion it creates a new space for creation that leads to dancing with a clear intention. It is then that we can begin to dive into the physiological aspects. Margaret N. H'Doubler states "Movements that follow any stimulating cause are the manifestations of physiological principles" (H'Doubler 48). This is why it feels so good to dance. Dancers get to put their expressions in motion, dance is a form of non-verbal communication: it is often overlooked because verbal language is usually thought of as the way to express to others. Communication sans words creates a whole new realm for interpretation and understanding. When visiting a foreign country it is key to figuring out people and exploring. It also gives insight into what a person is really saying- not what a person is telling you. As humans, we often

say one thing but mean another. Our ability to pick up on what a person is saying, by not saying it, gives us our real insight.

Humans are survivors, human beings have the ability to figure things out and make meanings from nothing. That is why dance is so sacred. It takes out the need verbal communication, which acts as a middleman. Dancers have the ability to communicate without having to put it in thoughtfully put together words and sentences. It is an authentic expression of the self, and that is something that is not practiced enough.

Dance is essential to human life because it allows us to live to our fullest capacity. It allows us to use our Multiple Intelligences. Dr. Howard Gardner developed this theory there are eight different intelligences in the brain. There are many different ways in which we retain information and it is important to be able to access and exercise our brain in each way. Dancing exercises our Body-Kinesthetic intelligence. Dancing and moving are an important part of life because they help integrate our understanding of the world. An African Diaspora says, "Movement can activate and integrate the activates of the entire brain. It has the potential to rekindle the neglected center of empathy and consequence. It can get in beneath the level of language where we are all more similar. It can preserve the language of the heart and soul" (To Dance is Human Handout). Dancing evokes old feelings, emotions, and connects people. It can bring up old memories and create new ones.

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To Dance is Human; lecture material. Taught by Judy Scaln.

Senior Thesis Project

I am currently in training to become certified as a Body Arts and Science Instructor.

I am training under the founder, Rael Isowitz at the B.A.S.I headquarters in Orange County.